

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BELIZE 00034 142110Z
ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMCONSUL BELIZE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5416
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELIZE 0034

GUATEMALA ALSO FOR ROCAP

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID ETRN BH GT HO
SUBJECT: GOB REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON ROADBUILDING ASSISTANCE

1. MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS FRED HUNTER CALLED AT CONGEN JANUARY 12 TO INQUIRE ABOUT POSSIBLE SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A PAVED ROAD, WHICH, TOGETHER WITH EXISTING ROADS IN BELIZE WOULD LINK ROAD SYSTEM OF THIS COUNTRY TO THOSE OF GUATEMALA, HONDURAS AND REST OF CENTRAL AMERICA. ROUTE IN WHICH HUNTER WAS MOST INTERESTED (ALTHOUGH ALTERNATIVES WERE DISCUSSED) WOULD REQUIRE NEW ROAD FROM BELIZE CITY SOUTHWARD ALONG COAST TO STANN CREEK. THIS WOULD SUBSTANTIALLY SHORTEN ROUTE BETWEEN THESE CITIES AS PRESENT ROUTE DEVIATES SOUTHWESTWARD TO BELMOPAN THEN SOUTHEASTWARD BACK TO COAST ALONG HUMMINGBIRD HIGHWAY. FROM STANN CREEK SOUTHWARD PROJECT DISCUSSED BY HUNTER WOULD INVOLVE IMPROVING EXISTING ROAD FROM STANN CREEK SOUTHWARD INTO TOLEDO DISTRICT PLUS EXTENDING THIS ROAD THE REMAINING TWENTY-FIVE MILES REQUIRED TO LINK UP WITH GUATEMALAN HIGHWAY SYSTEM (PRESUMABLY AT CADENAS) THUS PROVIDING EASY ACCESS TO PUERTO BARRIOS AND PUERTO CORTES/SAN PEDRO SULA AREA OF HONDURAS.

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2. HUNTER HAD IN MIND THAT THIS MIGHT BE ACCOMPLISHED AS SOME SORT OF APPENDAGE TO PAN AMERICAN HIGHWAY SYSTEM, AND HE SAID GOB COULD CONTRIBUTE TO FINANCING ACCORDING TO FORMULA SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH APPORTIONED COST OF PAN AMERICAN HIGHWAY BETWEEN U.S. AND BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES. HE CITED HIS RECOLLECTION OF A CONFERENCE HELD IN QUITO SOME YEARS AGO AT WHICH PROPOSAL WAS MADE TO RUN "ATLANTIC" BRANCH OF PAN

AMERICAN HIGHWAY FROM YUCATAN PENINSULA THROUGH BELIZE AND MOSQUITO COASTS OF HONDURAS AND NICARAGUA. HUNTER DID NOT KNOW WHAT BECAME OF PROPOSAL, BUT HE APPARENTLY HOLDS VAGUE HOPE THAT IT, OR SHORTENED VERSION LINKING BELIZE WITH HONDURAS, MIGHT BE RESURRECTED. FAILING THIS, HE WOULD LIKE INFO ON OTHER POSSIBLE SOURCES OF FUNDING.

3. AS JUSTIFICATION FOR PROPOSAL, HUNTER ARGUED THAT BELIZE IS ONLY CA ENTITY NOT SERVED BY PAN AMERICAN HIGHWAY AND INDEED HAS NO EFFECTIVE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION LINKS WITH ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL MAINSTREAM OF OTHER CA COUNTRIES. HE SAID GOB WITH UK FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE WOULD SOON COMPLETE MODERNIZATION NOW UNDERWAY OF HIGHWAY FROM NORTHERN BORDER TO BELIZE CITY, BUT THAT UK HAD NOT ACCEDED TO GOB REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE FOR FUNDS TO UPGRADE HUMMINGBIRD HIGHWAY WHICH LINKS BELMOPAN WITH STANN CREEK. HUNTER SAID GOB STRONGLY BELIEVES IMPROVED HUMMINGBIRD HIGHWAY OR NEW COASTAL ROAD PLUS SOUTHWARD EXTENSION AS DESCRIBED ABOVE WOULD BE OF ENORMOUS BENEFIT TO COMMERCE, TOURISM, AND AGRICULTURE--NOT ONLY IN BELIZE BUT ALSO IN REST OF CA, ESPECIALLY SOUTHEASTERN GUATEMALA AND NORTHERN HONDURAS.

4. WE TOLD HUNTER THAT WE OFFHAND DID NOT KNOW WHETHER IT WAS APPROPRIATE TO THINK IN TERMS OF PAN AMERICAN HIGHWAY NOR WHETHER OTHER RESOURCES MIGHT BE TAPPED AND DID NOT COMMENT ON EITHER PROJECT OR JUSTIFICATION, BUT WE AGREED PASS HIS REQUEST ON TO DEPARTMENT AND PERHAPS BUREAU OF PUBLIC ROADS IN HOPES INFORMATION HE SEEKS IS AVAILABLE IN WASHINGTON.

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5. HUNTER SAID HE HAD MADE THIS APPROACH WITH KNOWLEDGE AND APPROVAL OF PREMIER PRICE.

6. COMMENT: IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE ANY PROJECT THAT WOULD OFFER MORE HOPE OF BENEFICIALLY AFFECTING THE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY THAN A MODERN HIGHWAY LINKING IT TO ITS NEIGHBORS. WHILE OUR POLICY IN REGARD TO ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR BELIZE HAS BEEN TO LET BRITISH CARRY THE LOAD, LATTER ARE PROBABLY NOT UN A POSITION TO TAKE ON A PROJECT OF THE SORT HUNTER HAS IN MIND. FURTHERMORE, JUSTIFICATION FOR ANY ASSISTANCE WE MIGHT GIVE WOULD SEEM TO BE ON REGIONAL RATHER THAN ONE-COUNTRY BASIS.

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